

**AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

**LISTING OF CLAIMS**

1. (currently amended): A method for determining competitive partners from among a plurality of participants in a selected one of a plurality of rounds in a competitive event wherein selected ones of said participants have an associated ranking, said method comprising the steps of:
  - selecting, in accordance with said associated ranking, one of said participants[[],];
    - allowing said selected participant to select ~~one of said other participants~~  
another participant from said plurality of participants; and
    - removing said selected participant and selected other participant from further consideration for said selected [[round,]] round.
2. (original): The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:
  - organizing said participants into a first group and a second group wherein each of said participants in said first group is associated with said ranking.
3. (original): The method as recited in claim 2, further comprising:
  - associating a ranking with each of said participants in said second group.
4. (original): The method as recited in claim 3, wherein said associated ranking is determined in accordance with completion of known events.
5. (original): The method as recited in claim 4, wherein said known events are selected from the group consisting of: past competitive events among selected ones of said participants, accumulated results of past competitive events among selected ones of said participants, random selection, a lottery.

6. (currently amended): The method as recited in claim 1, wherein said competitive events are selected from the group consisting of: sporting events, television game shows, reality shows[[:]], intellectual games.
7. (original): The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
  - recording a winning and a losing participant of an engagement from each of said selected participants and said selected other participants in said selected round; and
  - removing said losing participant from further participation in said competitive event.
8. (original): The method as recited in claim 7, further comprising the step of: allowing said winning participant of said round to retain said associated ranking.
9. (original): The method as recited in claim 7, further comprising the step of: allowing said winning participant of said competitive round to retain an associated ranking of said loser when said losing participant's associated ranking is higher.
10. (original): The method as recited in claim 7, further comprising the step of: assigning a ranking to each winning participant of said round based on performance in said round.
11. (original): The method as recited in claim 1, wherein said round is selected from the group consisting of sporting events, game shows, reality shows, intellectual games.
12. (original): The method as recited in claim 1, wherein said participants are selected from the group consisting of: individuals, teams of individuals.
13. (original): The method as recited in claim 1, wherein each of said steps is executed until a single participant is remaining.
14. (withdrawn): A method for operating a competitive event having a plurality of rounds among a plurality of competitors comprising the steps of:
  - a. determining a ranking for at least half of said plurality of competitors, wherein said ranking is associated with an order of selection;

- b. selecting one of said ranked competitors in the order of said ranking;
- c. allowing said selected ranked competitor to select one of said remaining competitors as a competitive partner;
- d. continuously selecting said competitors until each of said competitors is associated with a competitive partner;
- e. recording a winning and a losing competitor in an engagement of competitive partners in said round of competitive event;
- f. removing said losing competitor from further participation; and
- g. associating a new ranking with each remaining competitor.

15. (withdrawn): The method as recited in claim 14, wherein said competitive event is selected from the group comprising: sporting events, game shows, reality shows, intellectual games.

16. (withdrawn): The method as recited in claim 15, wherein said sporting events are selected from the group consisting of: baseball, football, soccer, basketball, racing, golf, boxing, tennis.

17. (withdrawn): The method as recited in claim 14, wherein said ranking is determined from the group consisting of: prior performance, accumulated record in prior performance, a lottery, random selection.

18. (withdrawn): The method as recited in claim 14, wherein said new ranking is selected from the group consisting of: maintaining a current associated ranking, obtaining a losing competitor's ranking.

19. (withdrawn): The method as recited in claim 14, further comprising:  
iteratively repeating steps a-g for each of said rounds.

20. (withdrawn): The method as recited in claim 14, wherein said competitors are selected from the group consisting of: individuals, teams, individuals within a team.

21. (canceled)

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32. (canceled)
33. (canceled)
34. (withdrawn): The system as recited in claim 20, wherein said means is a processor in communication with a memory.
35. (canceled)
36. (canceled)
37. (canceled)
38. (currently amended): A method for determining competitive partners from among a plurality of participants in a selected one of a plurality of rounds in a competitive event wherein at least one of said participants has an associated ranking, said method comprising the steps of:
  - organizing at least one of said participants into a first group and remaining ones of said participants into a second group;
  - selecting, within said second group in accordance with said associated ranking, one of said participants[[,]];
    - allowing said selected participant to select ~~one of said other participants~~  
another participant from said plurality of participants; and
    - removing said selected participant and selected other participant from further consideration for said selected round.

39. (original): The method as recited in claim 38, wherein each of said at least one of said participants in said first group has a higher associated ranking than each of said participants in said second group.
40. (original): The method as recited in claim 38, wherein said associated ranking is determined in accordance with completion of known events.
41. (original): The method as recited in claim 40, wherein said known events are selected from the group consisting of: past competitive events among selected ones of said participants, accumulated results of past competitive events among selected ones of said participants, random selection, a lottery.
42. (currently amended): The method as recited in claim 38, wherein said competitive events are selected from the group consisting of: sporting events[[;]], television game shows[[;]], reality shows[[;]], intellectual games.
43. (original): The method as recited in claim 38, further comprising the steps of:
  - recording a winning and a losing participant of an engagement from each of said selected participants and said selected other participants in said selected round; and
  - removing said losing participant of said round from further participation in said competitive event.
44. (original): The method as recited in claim 43, further comprising the step of:
  - allowing said winner participant of said round to retain said associated ranking.
45. (original): The method as recited in claim 43, further comprising the step of:
  - allowing said winning participant of said competitive round to obtain an associated ranking of said loser when said loser's associated ranking is higher.
46. (original): The method as recited in claim 43, further comprising the step of:
  - assigning an associated ranking to each winning participant of said round based on a performance in said round.

47. (original): The method as recited in claim 38, wherein said round is selected from the group consisting of sporting events, game shows, reality shows, intellectual games.
48. (original): The method as recited in claim 38, wherein said participants are selected from the group consisting of: individuals, teams of individuals.
49. (original): The method as recited in claim 38, wherein said associated ranking of participants in said second group is determined randomly.